



NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS PANEL

NEWS RELEASE
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EDUCATORS, RESEARCHERS URGE CHANGES IN WAYS TEACHERS ARE PREPARED TO LINK PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TO STANDARDS

President of Carnegie Corporation Urges Rethinking Undergraduate and Graduate Education for Teachers During Second National Education Goals Panel Field Hearing

BURLINGTON, VT – (June 1, 2000) – Changes need to be made to the way teachers are trained, from their undergraduate education through teacher colleges and professional development programs. That was the message heard today as educators and researchers shared their stories of successful programs from across the Northeast. They were gathered for a field hearing hosted by the National Education Goals Panel on teacher training and professional development.

Vartan Gregorian, president of the Carnegie Corporation, started the hearing by addressing the role of higher education in preparing new teachers. He called for colleges and universities to rethink both teacher training and teachers' undergraduate education. He underlined the importance of not only preparing teachers but also holding universities and teacher colleges accountable for "the standards, the education and the qualifications of the teaching profession." Certification, accreditation of schools, and training in technology are all key components of a successful teacher education.

Dr. Richard Askey, professor of mathematics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison called for American teaching colleges to look east for successful models. He presented research conducted by Liping Ma that compared Chinese and American math teachers. Relative to their Chinese counterparts, the American teachers were much less able to calculate problems that they were expected to know and teach to their students. Dr. Askey concludes that "far too many U.S. teachers do not have adequate knowledge to teach the mathematics they should teach." He also spoke of a need to set standards high enough so that teachers training is on par with other countries.

Connecticut researcher Joan Baron and Vermont Commissioner of Education David Wolk argued that states need to play a role in working with teaching colleges and schools to ensure that teachers are prepared for their job and are provided continuing relevant professional development. In Connecticut, for example, incoming teachers must first pass a battery of tests. They then receive one-on-one mentoring and are assessed through portfolios of their work and student achievements.

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“Our children are our most precious resource,” said Wisconsin Governor and Panel Chair Tommy Thompson (R). “We owe it to them to make sure that their teachers are not only well-trained but supported and encouraged throughout their careers.”

The Panel then heard examples of “best practices” in teacher professional development. The examples given reinforced the need to rethink teacher training and align it with standards. Each of the three examples given are case studies in success. In New York City’s Community School District 2, for example, schools focus on how to help their teachers be the best. “We have staff developers in each building,” said Deputy Superintendent Bea Johnstone, “so teachers can get support in the classroom.” Schools also use team teaching models to give support to teachers. The focus on teacher training in literacy and math instruction has paid off; student test scores have risen to place the district second in the city.

In Vermont’s Lamoille South Supervisory Union, staff development has been geared to focus on meeting the standards-based educational plans for all students. Meanwhile, the whole-classroom approach is used at the Patrick O’Hearn School in Boston, which serves children from early childhood to grade five. At the O’Hearn School, students are from diverse ethnic, linguistic and ability backgrounds, yet all are expected to meet the same high standards. The school views education as an “ongoing and collaborative process,” said Principal Bill Henderson. “We all learn together and from each other.”

U.S. Senator Jim Jeffords, (R-VT), who co-hosted the hearing with Governor Thompson, said, “Today’s presenters demonstrated that effective training and development initiatives make for effective teachers and students. Teachers need to be prepared to help their students excel in this era of New Economy employment opportunities and demands.

Today’s field hearing was the second of four to be held nationwide as part of a yearlong exploration into promising practices in achieving high academic standards with all students. The first field hearing was held in Los Angeles in May and focused on research and programs that raise academic achievement among minority, urban and non-native English speaking students. Presenters from today’s field hearing explored research and programs in teacher preparation and training. Later field hearings will explore school structuring and data and reporting practices. The evidence gathered will be published in a report later this year and will be the focus of a national teleconference held in December.

“The data is there – when innovative solutions are applied to teacher training and professional development, standards-based reform can work. We encourage communities nationwide to consider replicating these successful programs,” said Ken Nelson, executive director of the Panel. “Now we have real-world examples. We launched these field hearings to help others learn from these examples of promising practices in action.”

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The Goals Panel 2000 Agenda

Today's field hearing is part of a yearlong initiative entitled "High Achieving Schools: The Promise, The Practice, The Results" that will focus on standards-based reform. The initiative began in April with a national teleconference on Baldrige criteria and the application of other business practices in education. The first regional field hearing was held last month in Los Angeles. Other highlights of the National Education Goals Panel agenda for 2000 include:

- Two other regional hearings in Atlanta (September 19) and Chicago (October) that will examine issues key to achieving high standards for all students;
- The formation of the Measuring Success Task Force, led by former Maine Gov. John "Jock" McKernan, that will make recommendations on data needed to encourage reform; and
- A final National Teleconference in December that will engage the nation by clarifying what has been learned and will empower educators to build consensus around promising practices.

About the National Education Goals Panel

Created in July 1990, the National Education Goals Panel is a bipartisan body of federal and state officials made up of eight governors, four members of Congress, four state legislators and two members appointed by the president. To learn more about the Goals Panel, please visit www.negp.gov. The eight National Education Goals call for greater levels of: student achievement and citizenship; high school completion; teacher education and professional development; parental participation in the schools; literacy and lifelong learning; and safe, disciplined, and alcohol-and-drug-free schools. The Goals also call for all children to be ready to learn by the time they start school and for US students to be first in the world in mathematics and science achievement.

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